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SUBJECT: U/S GLASSMAN ENGAGES SAUDI PRINCES AND PROFESSORS ON
LONG-TERM COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES

¶1. Summary and comment: Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James K. Glassman engaged Saudi Princes Salman Ibn Abdulaziz, Governor of Riyadh, and Naif bin Abdulaziz, Minister of Interior, and university professors in deliberations about counterterrorism strategies and U.S. and Saudi public images - perceptions and misconceptions. During his November 18-20, 2008 visit, U/S Glassman stressed the value of long-term initiatives like exchanges and dialogue to counter extremist views, particularly among young people. Wide local media coverage further amplified the message to Saudi and regional audiences. The timeliness of the visit, following the recent initiatives by King Abdullah to further interfaith dialogue and provide additional funding for educational exchanges, and the high-level attention given the visit by the Saudi government, further heightened media interest and increased public awareness of shared bilateral interests. End summary and comment.

PRINCES SALMAN AND NAIF SUPPORT FUTURE COLLABORATION

¶2. With the Governor of Riyadh Prince Salman Ibn Abdul Aziz, U/S Glassman discussed Al-Hurra programming, historical bilateral relations, and common perceptions about Americans and Saudis. In a meeting with Minister of Interior Naif bin Abdulaziz, U/S Glassman reaffirmed U.S. interest in combating extremist ideology and highlighted long-term strategies to engage youth. Prince Naif expressed interest in future collaborative efforts, noting progress in Saudi government support for educational opportunities for young women.

ALUMNI SHARE NETWORKING ASPIRATIONS TO PROMOTE EXCHANGES

¶3. Ambassador Fraker hosted USG alumni and embassy contacts at a representational event in honor of U/S Glassman. Guests shared their aspirations for a strong network of Saudis capable of building on King Abdullah's efforts to promote dialogue and cultural and educational exchanges. Guests cited personal fulfillment derived from their own US cross-cultural experiences. They noted the major obstacles to reform, bureaucratic and otherwise, but they stressed bilateral business and security interests as justification to further strengthen relations.

CANDID DIALOGUE WITH PROFESSORS HEIGHTENS UNDERSTANDING

¶4. Saudi foreign policy advisors and professors at the Institute for Diplomatic Studies deliberated over a multi-pronged approach to countering extremism. At a roundtable discussion, U/S Glassman fielded commentary addressing new ways to engage youth, the promotion of educational and cultural exchanges, the value of interfaith dialogue, the image of the U.S. in the Middle East, the U.S. role in the international economy, foreign policy initiatives, citizen involvement in public diplomacy efforts, and the need for governments to mirror messages with actions. In this latter regard, several speakers, as was to be expected, brought up the Israeli-Arab conflict as a key factor undermining U.S. credibility. U/S Glassman stressed U.S. commitment to settling the conflict, noting President Bush's steadfast support for the two-state solution and Secretary Rice's seventeen visits to the region.

¶5. In a roundtable discussion with professors representing the Association for Media and Communication and the Saudi Social Society, U/S Glassman engaged in a frank discussion of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. Distinguished mass communication professionals

from King Saud University and Imam Mohamed Islamic University voiced appreciation for U/S Glassman's candor on a range of topics from Al Hurra's effectiveness to the frequent turnover of Undersecretaries in his position. The energetic participants particularly noted U/S Glassman's description of the region's media sector as highly developed and competitive.

IMPRESSIONABLE STUDENTS AWED BY U/S'S ATTENTION

¶6. U/S Glassman visited a classroom of 15 English Access Microscholarship students in the working class Riyadh neighborhood of Suaidi, the neighborhood which served as the presumed setting for much of the violence in the recent film, "The Kingdom." Students, never before in the presence of a visiting U.S. dignitary and somewhat intimidated, posed questions about U.S. higher education, the presidential elections and the city of Las Vegas. Teachers and administrators thanked the U/S for his visit and assured him that such Embassy engagement strongly motivates the bashful but nevertheless talented students.

MESSAGE AMPLIFIED VIA LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE

¶7. Saudi Channel II featured an interview on November 21 in which U/S Glassman emphasized long-term public outreach goals that encourage listening, explaining and exchanging information to achieve stability and prosperity in the region. Saudi Press Agency reported that Governor of Riyadh Prince Salman and Interior Minister Prince Naif met separately with U/S Glassman and discussed issues of mutual concern. Al-Riyadh reported on U/S Glassman's roundtable discussion about the "War of Ideas" with professors at the Institute for Diplomatic Studies. Al-Riyadh also highlighted group discussion about King Abdullah's Interfaith Dialogue Initiative. Al-Madina columnist and Imam Mohammed Islamic University Professor Abdullah Al-Tayer referenced U/S Glassman's comments to criticize the Al-Qa'eda ideology and leadership, writing: "A number of colleagues and I gathered in an off-the-record discussion with a senior American official who recently visited the Kingdom. The American official noted that the King's interfaith initiative has been positively received in the US. What draws my attention in the comment of the official was his observation that this initiative came from a religious Arab ruler. Therefore, it gained credibility and was taken seriously by American officials and ordinary citizens." He continued, "I ask myself, what would be the fate of our (Islamic) nation and of the world if Al-Zawahiri and bin Laden were able to gain power in a country?" Al-Tayer concluded: "Today in the West, the Holy Qur'an is associated with terrorism, and the Azan (prayer call) is associated with the murder of innocent Westerners. How can we expect them to respect our religion and principles? Instead of this destructive model ... King Abdullah, by his leadership, is representing Islam to the world and restoring the image of the Kingdom."

FRAKER